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E.O. 11652. GDS 5/19/87 (HAVERKAMP, R) OR-M

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SUBJECT: Comments on the October 30, 1980, Election in Jamaica (U)

REF:

(U) The attachment is an assessment of the themes and issues which characterized the campaign in the October 1980 elections in Jamaica, prepared by Nancy Mason of the Political Section. Because of an oversight, it was not sent before and is now primarily of historical interest. However, the analysis and information it contains are an important part of the record, and it merits wider attention than it has received to date.

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Attachment - Comments on the October 30, 1980 Election in Jamaica

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COMMENTS ON THE OCTOBER 30, 1980 ELECTION IN JAMAICA

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1. Election Themes and Issues.

The People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) took their messages to the people of Jamaica via the media, speaking tours, graffiti and posters. Basically, the JLP concentrated on the economic issues, while the PNP asked for a recommitment to socialism. Based on polls preceding the election, and the voting itself, the JLP message fell on more fertile ground. Other issues intruded, and each no doubt played some role in fixing each voter's decision, but the economic situation was paramount and underlay each separate message.

A. The Economy. The JLP's central message was that the PNP government, through ideological commitment to an alien theory, socialism, and through mismanagement, had brought the Jamaican economy to its knees. Party advertising and radio speeches harped on the several years of negative growth that the country had suffered and painted a bleak future if the PNP were returned to power. Radio spots had prominent members of the JLP discussing each major sector of the economy--agriculture, tourism, bauxite, manufacturing, housing, etc. Edward Seaga was pictured as the financial genius who would turn the economy around by building confidence and encouraging foreign investment. The JLP, and especially Seaga in his speeches, refrained from promising an immediate improvement and actually forecasted a grim immediate future. "Deliverance is near" was the JLP theme, and apparently it was believed by the majority of the voters. The PNP, on the other hand, made only a half-hearted attempt to justify its economic record in its eight years in office, but drew constant attention to the economic problems of the whole world, the rise in the price of oil, the intervention of the capitalistic world to Jamaica's disadvantage, and the disaster of the International Monetary Fund, which set impossibly high standards for third-world countries. With some justification, the PNP pointed to social benefits such as paid maternity leave, the minimum wage, an end to the legal status of bastardy, and the adult literacy program (JAMAL) as worthwhile achievements and as evidence that its value system put people ahead of money. On the walls of Kingston, however, "IMF" came to mean, "Is Manley's Fault." As one Jamaican politican put it, "The most eloquent voice during this election was a man's stomach," and the economic turn-around promised by the JLP won the vote.

B. Socialism/Capitalism. Although almost inseparable from the economic issue, the question of socialism versus capitalism assumed more political significance than economic. The PNP urged people to "vote socialism, in this ya' election, vote against reaction, in this ya' election, vote PNP in this ya' election." The JLP was painted as the party that would end or reverse the political liberalization of the masses that the PNP had started. If economic success was hard to find during the PNP tenure, it was implied, no matter, because a revolution does not succeed overnight but will bring right and justice in the end. "Stand firm for the third term" was the PNP motto, and resist the temptation to become the "house slave of the western world" in the thrall of foreign interests. The JLP plan, as outlined in its manifesto,

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to follow what was derisively referred to as the "Puerto Rican Model" with its accent on job creation by importing industries, was dismissed as a return to the days of "sweated labor" where only the rich investors benefitted. The free market economy advocated by the JLP was blamed for the gulf between the rich and poor that had characterized the previous JLP government from 1962 to 1972. The PNP promised to continue its fight to keep Jamaica for Jamaicans, even though it took a little longer and required a little more struggle. In the end, it was promised, the social benefits that the PNP introduced would survive because everyone knew they were worth fighting for. On its part, the JLP pointed to the PNP as the party that had introduced an alien philosophy into what is essentially an individualistic society. The JLP characterized the leftists in the PNP as communists bent on imposing the Cuban model in Jamaica, complete with suppression of the fundamental freedoms, and the imposition of party loyalty as the means of measuring a man's worth. A hammer and sickle with the words "vote PNP" were stenciled on Kingston walls. The JLP's efforts to paint the PNP as a communistic party were aided by some actions of the leftists themselves. The Workers' Party of Jamaica (WPJ), headed by Trevor Munroe, fielded no electoral candidates but endorsed the candidates of the PNP. In some parishes, notably in St. Elizabeth, Clarendon and Manchester, members of the WPJ campaigned for and canvassed alongside PNP activists. For many people, Trevor Munroe was given high points for honesty when, at a rally for PNP candidate for Central Westmoreland Pearl McKoy, he said, "Socialism is communism and communism is socialism." High points for honesty, perhaps, but not too many for political savvy. Manley's praise of Cuban Fidel Castro and Dudley Thompson's embarrassment with Cuban Ambassador Ulises Estrada undoubtedly lent credence to the JLP's message that socialism was the twin of communism. In a basically religious society, and one not too keen on rapid progress toward the unknown, the idea of a communistic PNP leading the country was unacceptable.

C. Violence. Over 600 people died in what are presumed to be politically-motivated incidents between January and October 30, 1980. While guns were not new to election periods (conventional wisdom says they were first introduced as as political weapon in the West Kingston contest between Dudley Thompson and Edward Seaga in 1967), the frequency of the deaths, the almost haphazard choice of victims and the sophistication of the weapons added new dimensions to the issue of violence and terrorized the population. Moreover, violence moved out of Kingston into the countryside. Although most political observers feel that the PNP instigated the violence, no one seriously believes that the JLP was blameless. The use of violence, so the theory goes, convinces your supporters that you have the might to protect them at the same time it intimidates the supporters of the opposition to stay at home on election day (or not to be enumerated for the elections, as evidenced by the very high death rate during the enumeration period in July). Toward the close of the campaigning, the PNP launched an all-out attack on the JLP as the party behind the guns. In his speeches, Prime Minister Manley would ask the crowd, "Who is responsible for the violence?" and then ask in turn if Norman Manley,

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Hugh Shearer, or he himself had even been known to use violence, to which the crowd answered no. Clearly, Edward Seaga was responsible, the set piece implied. However, several events cast doubt on Manley's claim to personal innocence and to group innocence for his party. The involvement of General Secretary D.K. Duncan in a shoot-out in South Western St. Catherine, where a JLP supporter was killed and the JLP candidate wounded, was not very edifying. The PNP meeting in Spanish Town which was aborted by gunfire, and appeared to many to be staged for the benefit of JBC cameras, was even more damaging to the PNP's image because of the sight of D.K. Duncan sprawled on the stage with a gun in his hand. The shooting of Roy McGann in East Rural St. Andrew on Nomination Day morning and the questionable "facts" used by the PNP to blame the JLP and the security forces for coldblooded murder added to the impression of a party "protesting too much." Perhaps most damaging to Manley's own reputation was the incident in which he led a party of supporters against Cecil July in South East St. Elizabeth, following which two children were killed in a shoot-out. Manley said, in a statement, he marched against July and JLP supporters to establish the principle that PNP supporters could not be run off the road, an action not especially appreciated in a Prime Minister. The charge that Manley was waving two guns at the time has been hotly denied by the PNP, and the police report makes no mention of it. However, several people from St. Elizabeth are willing to swear that Manley was, in fact, armed with two handguns. Moreover, the fact that no PNP supporter was hurt during the scuffle, while the two children were killed and July had eight teeth knocked out, undermined the PNP's claim to virtue in this instance. For its part, the JLP did not use the violence issue much at all. Statements simply deplored the rising use of guns, corrected allegations made by the PNP that it was responsible for certain incidents, and promised to confiscate the guns after the JLP was elected.

D. Personalities. The PNP relied heavily on Manley's personal charm and charisma. Most of the television advertising spots showed him talking with the people, helping to open a school or other structure, etc. His speeches received attention on the JBC evening news on TV and during the day's radio newscasts. He was pictured as the leader that had Jamaica's welfare at heart and could not be bought and sold as, by implication, Seaga could be. He also was frequently cited as a third world leader to whom the world listened and who had carved out for himself, and by extension for Jamaica, a niche on the international stage. Seaga, on the other hand, was pictured as a tool of western capitalism. As the campaign heated up, "fascist and reactionary" were the epithets heaped on him in PNP speeches and statements. Meanwhile, Seaga was pictured in JLP ads as the man with the economic knowledge and dedication needed to turn Jamaica back to a solvent path. He rarely was pictured alone; instead, he was shown surrounded by other top JLP figures, chief among them Hugh Shearer, former Prime Minister and President of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union. (Shearer may well be the most popular politician in Jamaica.) Seaga was shown as the head of a competent team, in contrast to Manley's individualism. It is estimated that of the 41 percent of the population who voted for the PNP, a large share stuck with the PNP because of the belief in the personal worth of Manley or distrust of Seaga. While not an overriding issue, personality almost certainly played a role in voter decision.

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2. Comment

Absent a post-election survey to determine voter attitudes on election day, no clear reasons for the JLP sweeping victory can be stated categorically. (It should be noted that no survey would be reliable in any case, given the Jamaican penchant for saying what the questioner is perceived to want to hear and the distrust such questions would engender regarding reprisals for voting the wrong way.) However, it does seem clear that the economic situation only reinforced the Jamaican tradition of limiting a party to two terms in office. The commitment to the ideals of democratic socialism that Manley and the PNP asked for simply did not sit well with the many Jamaicans who had seen their standard of living decline in the past eight years and who were told that the hope for their future lay in an ideology they didn't understand and weren't sure they wanted. Although some would see this election as a choice between socialism and capitalism, the majority of Jamaicans lack the sophistication to vote on ideological grounds. For them the choice was between Manley's economic acumen and Seaga's. The other factors--the distrust of a little-understood theory called socialism and its too close resemblance to communism, the perception that the PNP was responsible for a lot of the violence despite disclaimers of innocence and the wearing thin of Manley's charm--all contributed to the PNP defeat. "Better must come," the PNP promised in 1976; it didn't. In fact, it got worse, so the people voted the party out to give the JLP a chance.

3. Although the JLP recovered from its 1976 defeat, when it garnered only thirteen of the sixty seats in Parliament, the prognosis for the PNP at this time is not so bright. For one thing, former Prime Minister Shearer and Edward Seaga, who retained their seats in 1976, were supported by eleven other people who had a similar political philosphy. This is not the case in the present PNP opposition, which is divided into moderate and leftist camps. The PNP candidates who could have succeeded Michael Manley as head of the party, should he step down as party leader for a position in an international organization, as is widely suspected, and who could direct the party back to a slight left-of-center path with less ideology and more practicality, did not retain their seats. P. J. Patterson, who enjoys national popularity was defeated, as was Hugh Small, a national figure currently identified with the left wing of the party but probably astute enough to modify his position to fit more with the Jamaican population's. Of those PNP candidates re-elected, the most nationally known is D.K. Duncan, who also happens to have the reputation as the most radical of the PNP leaders. The reputation appears to be deserved, and there is little evidence to hand that he will change his Marxist/Leninist stripes for markings more acceptable to the Jamaican society. Tony Spaulding, former Minister of Construction and brother of the current Attorney General, Minister of Justice, and Minister of National Security Winston Spaulding, is seen by some politicians as the man who could lead the party back to a more centrist

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position. He has the intelligence and organizational ability to do it, but his dedication to the project still is questionable. Moreover, Spaulding would have to overcome a reputation as the PNP party's gunman and a reputation for corruption. The other PNP MPs, Portia Simpson, Ralph Brown, Horace Clarke, Terrance Gillette and Seymour Mullings, currently lack any kind of a national following, although Brown, Clarke and Mullings were Cabinet ministers in the previous government.

4. The 41 percent share of the voters that chose the PNP over the JLP provide a sufficient base on which to reconstruct the party. The outstanding question that must first be answered, however, is why they voted that way. In his concession speech on October 30, D.K. Duncan expressed a conviction that the majority of the people of Jamaica were committed to a "genuine proletarian democracy," not to the "bourgeoisie democracy" of the JLP. Subsequent statements by Duncan indicate that he is convinced the 41 percent who voted for the PNP are committed democratic socialists. Other political observers question this. The personal popularity of Manley, combined with a distrust for Edward Seaga, almost certainly induced a large share of the minority to vote PNP. Predication by the PNP that JLP economics would spell disaster for the poorest Jamaicans probably influenced others. Total loyalty to the PNP that could not be shaken by the failures of the two Manley administrations accounted for other votes. An honest assessment by the party and a strenuous effort to capitalize on the strengths it discovers, even if ideological baggage must be jettisoned, could restore to the PNP the following its once had. Given the Jamaican tradition of allowing a party two terms before seeking a change, the PNP may well have ten years to regroup.

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